

NOTES AND NEWS

MUSIC CONFERENCE

N. RHODESIA

A Music Conference was held at Munali Secondary School, Lusaka, Northern Rhodesia, from the 15th to the 17th July 1957, which was well attended by those connected with the education of Africans throughout the territory. The Conference was called by the Director of African Education for the purpose of considering the subject of music teaching in all African schools in Northern Rhodesia and to make recommendations for a syllabus of music to be adopted by the Department.

During the course of the Conference it was reported that two collections of folk music had been started, one of them consisting of 242 Bemba lyrics. Several speakers mentioned the desirability of recording African music and creating record libraries of indigenous music for school purposes, and it was generally agreed that the folk songs of Northern Rhodesia should be collected and detailed research into the traditional forms of music should be encouraged.

A recital of recordings of African music of the Federation and neighbouring territories was given by Mr. W. C. Little on the 15th July.

It is hoped that, as a result of this Conference, the interest in indigenous music in the Federation will be considerably stimulated.

The Rev. A. M. Jones, a Research Member of the African Music Society, who had had several years' experience as a missionary in Northern Rhodesia had made the suggestion, through one of the delegates, that a 'Music School' should be started as an institution of African music for the territory.

Further information on the Conference and its decisions may be obtained from Mr. F. D. Milne, African Education Department, P.O. Box 593, Lusaka.

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NOTES ON MUSIC IN AFRICAN SCHOOLS

The following notes were contributed by the Hon. Secretary of the African Music Society as a possible basis for discussion at the recent conference on indigenous music in Northern Rhodesian schools. They may prove useful for other territories should a local conference be called for a similar purpose.)

First ask yourself . . .

What is music for in schools?

- (a) the entertainment of pupils?
- (b) an exercise in discipline and mental alertness?
- (c) the heightening of musical awareness?
- (d) an analytical study of the craft of music?

If so . . . whose music . . . what music . . . and for what purpose?

Primary Schools

Music should spring out of the home environment and lead on from, and not away from the musics heard while still on the mother's back . . . the domestic work songs, agricultural songs, dance songs and religious songs sung and danced by mother while the child is still in skin contact with mother.

Any musical policy which denies the validity of this experience is heading for future complications. It no doubt accounts for the high proportion of lyrics which refer directly and indirectly to Mother.

School Book of Local Lyrics.

The first essential is a local school collection of lyrics. All children can be roped in to help add to the collection. There is no necessity at this stage to write any musical notations, either syllabic or staff. The tone of the words themselves will recall to mind the melody and rhythm of songs once they have been learnt.

This collection will include . . .

Verse. Children's and traditional verses, counting jingles and games jingles.

Most of this has never been written on paper and would be an excellent way of converting oral to visual knowledge.

Work Songs. Herding songs of the small boys, domestic songs of small girls associated with their duties. Women's domestic songs, such as grinding, pounding and washing songs; agricultural songs for hoeing and cultivating. Men's work songs for manual labour, threshing and hunting.

Game and Action Songs, Story Songs, Dance Songs

Traditional Love Songs.

Initiation and Marriage songs.

(See the I.L.A.M. Handbook for classifications of the many types of African songs which are likely to be found).

It must be realized that young Africans may sing about subjects which in other societies are taboo but are freely discussed in their own such as incest and other sex taboos without prudery. Such songs should be duly noted down whatever the subsequent use to which they may eventually be put. Apply local music to all physical training.

Local songs sung to local drums make an excellent basis for P.T. as at Domboshawa School, near Salisbury. It helps to turn drill into an extension of dance drama.

Make and keep at the school all the simpler forms of African percussion instruments.

This will include simple sticks beaten together in multiple rhythms, rattles, pieces of metal or glass, drums and even simple ensembles of one note pipes, whatever the local environment and flora will provide. Create percussion bands of these . . . to be used on all important occasions, school events, football matches, feast days, patriotic occasions and visits of VIP's. This will develop the association of loyalty with local music suitable for the moment.

(Beware of teachers who compose songs for their pupils in praise of the teacher . . . a common practice . . . and political songs composed by teachers . . . also common).

Whatever the pressure, definitely avoid all songs of foreign origin or the whole of the rest of your basic training will be in jeopardy, and a magical association with foreigners will take its place.

Secondary Schools

The same basic principles as for the primary schools but on a wider basis, now including not only the local tribe or language but all the languages represented in the school.

By comparing these territorial types of music it will lead naturally on to inter-territorial African music, which can then be compared with foreign musics, and especially the folk musics of the world which can be comprehended by the students.

The study and practice of school music would fall under two main divisions . . . music for action, and music for contemplation.

It will be realized that at this level students will have divided themselves into two groups . . . the simpler majority which can only appreciate music for action, dance music and the like; and those in the minority who are capable of taking music seriously, applying themselves to the techniques of instrumental playing and to theory, and the still smaller number who will be able to initiate music either orally at a folk level, inventing new variations on old themes, or more rarely, new compositions.

It would be advisable in all secondary schools to determine which are the potential musicians and teach only those few the mysteries of music in its broadest sense. The remainder should be kept strictly to action music, to participate in the simpler forms and not permitted to intrude upon the studies of those few who will repay musical teaching. Music should be treated as a reserved study and it should be a privilege to be allowed to join the select few . . . perhaps even by election and proof of ability.

The general musical training now given everyone is already showing signs of swift degeneration. Teachers for example who, whether musical or not are expected to initiate music in their schools fall back on the lowest forms of tonic and dominant harmonies to the great detriment of music everywhere in Africa, and indeed can destroy the musical potential of a whole community.

The closed shop principle in music should be applied if any advance is to be expected in secondary schools.

Under this study the following headings come to mind:—

Study If primary school children have been well grounded in their local music the next step is easy . . . The study of comparative elements in local music, and the effect of environment upon the styles of music. This leads on to the different musics found in different countries and places all music in perspective.

The relationship between melody and speech tone is highly important and leads to the proper appreciation of African verse as an oral literature in its own right. This in turn leads on to a study of its structure and ultimately to the aesthetics of verse and its contents. Sidelights here include oral history of African peoples and the moral and social virtues which are so frequently implied in such lyrics and verse.

The physics of music and of musical instruments is now an essential for any African student who is to achieve a full musical life. This includes an awareness of modality, scales the harmonic series as opposed to free modality. Stresses and tone production in musical instruments and methods of sound amplification.

The practical physics should then include the making of instruments starting with a simple xylophone note.

If clever workers can be found, they should be able to produce their own instruments for a school band including drums, provided the school funds will run to a few essential ingredients which may not be readily available locally, wood and metal, hides and beeswax.

The objective must be to prepare the more musical students for a life of practical music making within their own society, in a manner in which their own people can readily participate and not for the more precious forms of glee singing for presentation at concert parties.

On the other hand those whose main interest in music is social should be given a perspective on other musics and not only the simpler songs of one nation such as the English. Russian and Spanish folk musics have much in common with many African musics and the mulatto nature of Brazilian, West Indies and

Negro music should be stressed as few Africans share either the musical style or the aesthetic content of such musics. Negro spirituals are specially prone to mishandling by Africans whose religious tendencies usually lead to other forms of expression including religious dancing.

If foreign religious musical forms are to be taught, it is advisable to start from the earlier ecclesiastical¹ forms, which was done with such success at the Namirembe Cathedral, Kampala. The danger in an exclusive interest in hymns is the stultifying effect of the use of the three common chords as the only form of harmony and the distortion of stress from the normal African trochaic to the European iambic.

The social aspect of song

In African communities, song is used for a number of purposes but none more important than for the creation of social solidarity. The wicked are lampooned, the wise praised, and the young are warned against the evils of the day. Morality teaching forms a large proportion of their repertoire.

In brief, songs are used as a corrective, and a consolation for disappointment, the very personal nature of so many songs bringing their usefulness into the heart of the community. The use of stereotyped songs from a book which is the usual foreign practise, diminishes this community aspect and can be no effective substitute for the intimate personal compositions of the folk themselves, singing about themselves by name and not about some distant generalized situation referred to in printed song books.

Much more could be said in this direction and it can be summed up in this way . . . that the most effective songs in an African community are local songs sung in a local manner. European songs from hymns to jive, are all eventually subjected to 'Africanisation' and until this occurs they are not as effective for their purpose as indigenous ones. Social snobbery, which is a common failing all over the continent, alone demands an attachment to the foreign rather than the indigenous, which accounts for the uncultured state of so many educated Africans, musically speaking.

Drama and Fantasy. It is strange how few people of either race appreciate the extent to which Africans of all ages live in a fantasy world of their own, and how important drama and dramatic colours and dress are to the average individual. This can be most easily observed in their dances, country and town dances alike. Frequently the fairy tale atmosphere of the equivalent of princes and princesses are carried out in detail through the appointment of a whole hierarchy of officials and servitors from Kings, Queens, Presidents and Marshals downwards. No survey of music in schools can be complete without examining the possibilities of catering for informal drama and appropriate dance action. Admittedly much of the modern dress for such occasions is simple and often tawdry and on the other hand can be violently over ornate. A patronizing attitude of mind to this typically African phenomenon can be very wounding and indeed stupid. I suggest that the whole question of gala dress be taken seriously as a legitimate extension of musical and dramatic activities.

It would offer an excellent opportunity for the conscious appreciation of good taste and the development of the means of satisfying it. One does not stress the outworn reversal to a 'warrior' display, as no child of the present generation has ever seen an African fighting man in his country panoply. The attitude of mind to this subject must be wide open to new stimuli and the school might well attempt to create legitimate costumes and effects which will not bring the participants into contempt or ridicule, for example by allowing the use of dark glasses which may be a residuum from the days of masked dances.

This will not be easy to do in secondary schools with the well known group consciousness of teen agers, but it should certainly, to my mind, be watched carefully and followed up as the occasion arises.

Arising out of this comes the use of *dances in schools*, and the encouragement of the creation of bands and other instrumental ensembles from local material. The most attractive town dance music can be created by using local drums (not bought jazz sets) and pipes or singing horns, rattles and other simple melodic instruments such as home made xylophones (as done in Tanganyika).

The purchase of foreign instruments apart from their high cost, leads away from the consolidation of music making by the people themselves and into the hands of a few indifferent semi-professionals.

If anyone can be found both sufficiently alert and active the study of dance form opens up a wide field which can then be applied effectively in the employment of extra-tribal dances, i.e. by learning the dance forms of others where such merit the case.

Prizes and Competitions.

The usual European approach to the subject of music is concentrated in the concert, the eisteddfod and the prize list. These I would put bottom of the list as good music should be treated on its merits and not necessarily on its competitive merit. Many African school concerts start with indigenous songs, (of a kind) and then progress onto school and institutional songs with a corresponding decline in musical value as the concert proceeds. The school of course thinks that they have made a concession to the 'primitive' and have gone on to the 'modern'. In very few cases throughout the whole continent is school and institutional music a fraction as complex or evolved as the indigenous which is often far more musically developed. The correction this damaging attitude towards indigenous musical genius and culture must be the continual endeavour of all concerned if music in African secondary schools is to have any future at all other than an imitative one of somewhat dubious quality.

We now know enough about African music to realize that the creative talent exists to a remarkable

degree in most Africa communities and music in schools will not do justice to their character and personality until both teachers and pupils treat the subject without prejudice, constructively and artistically.

The objective of any conference on music in African Schools must be, therefore, to find out whether the *magic* of primary and secondary schooling with its falsely assumed rise in social status can be placed in its proper perspective and the musical talents of Africa be allowed to take their correct place in the social and cultural life of the students in after life.

There is so much more that could be said but perhaps this may suggest a basis for some of your discussions.

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EXTRACT OF A REPORT FROM DR. JOHAN K. LOUW (A.M.S. REPRESENTATIVE NYASALAND)

"It is essential that church music should be very much more an expression of the soul of the people than it is today, and that it is unlikely that Christian people will begin to see that God does not need to be praised through an entirely foreign medium, if educated men and women—those who are at the present moment in our senior primary and secondary schools—do not come to realize that one does not need to think that a *bangwe*, *keimba*, *zigologodo* (xylophone) etc., are below the dignity of the halls of a secondary institution of learning. I had to overcome this feeling among boys at the Blantyre Secondary School before I could move them to make our first xylophone on which quite a number of the pupils were then found to be able to give excellent performances.

"At Mkhoma an opportunity presented itself in a quite different way. A syllabus for African music as a "special subject" was agreed upon by the Department of Education. I had suggested using Mr. Tracey's book *Ngoma*, and, as a very important part of the syllabus, attempting to get to know the African musicians who might be found in the villages around Mkhoma. I was surprised to find how many there were quite near enough for the class to visit on an afternoon walk, and who were also willing to come to the school and give the class the benefit of their art. In groups of two the boys agreed each to take one of these old men, visit him in his village, write down his songs, get something about the story of his life, get photographs of him and his instruments, and put all the material together in a book about the subject of their study.

"When we get going at this school, I plan to attempt something similar to what I did at Blantyre, but also to try to contact African musicians in the same way we did at Mkhoma."

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NEWS FROM LONDON

London this year has seen the formation of several cultural groups intended to show Londoners the dancing and music and songs of individual countries or language groups, or of West Africa as a whole. The West African Arts Club Music Group suffered a setback when Kotey Tay the Ghanaian drummer left the School of Oriental and African Studies and returned to his country. It revived immediately on his return to this country for further study, and came into its own for the celebrations for the independence of Ghana. On Independence night his Group gave a magnificent display of Ghana dancing and drumming at both the Chelsea and Battersea Town Halls. The drumming was highly traditional which befitted the very national spirit prevailing at the time. It was unfortunately unable to entertain Dr. Kwame Nkrumah during his visit for the Prime Ministers' Conference as the Ghana Prime Minister left before the date fixed for the show, but they performed for the (International) Cultural Exchange at the Chelsea Town Hall on July 16th. which had an 'African Night', and on the 23rd left for Moscow to perform at the Bi-annual Festival there.

The Nigerian Cultural Committee put on a splendid concert for the Nigerian Delegates who came over for the Nigerian Constitution Conference. This Group has members from language groups all over Nigeria, and they performed dances and songs from many different places. Ibo, Hausa, Calabar, Yoruba and Itsekiri dances were all shewn, and London welcomed back Mr. E. L. Lasibikan B.B.C., T.V. and Third Programme star who demonstrated the "Talking Drum" played tonally by squeezing the thongs under the arm. By following the tone patterns of the Yoruba language, the drum can easily be interpreted by anyone speaking the Yoruba language.

Chief Okorodudu has a very clever and dynamic wife who is an expert on Itsekiri dances and songs. Chief Okorodudu is the Commissioner for the Western Region of Nigeria, and at a party at Londonderry House in Park Lane his wife and Mr. O. Efuaye presented the Warri Ladies' Group in a delightful programme of Itsekiri Culture. They performed the modern *Iyessi* dance and the *Alala-Ukawa* which dates back to before 1485, and finally *Ines* the official dance of the Itsekiri National Society. The dancing was accompanied by seven excellent drummers.

The Nigeria Women's League also has a cultural group which has performed on several occasions in London, and in private homes.

Although this increase in national dancing is understandable and welcome in countries gaining independence, there is no wane in Europeanised "Cafe music" or "High Life". Ambrose Campbell and his West African Rhythm Brothers is increasingly popular especially since he began making highly successful records for sale in West Africa. Guitarist Brewster Hughes broke away from this group to form his own "Afro-Cuban Rockers" which made some background music for a film about Nigeria made by one of the oil companies. Another brilliant newcomer is Sammy Akpabot who plays an excellent vibraphone and trumpet, and is now studying music. More seriously Olu Sowande, brother of the famous Fela, gives concerts of classical renderings of Yoruba Folk Songs.

Londoners flocked with such enthusiasm last year to "Les Ballets Africains" that the show paid a second successful visit.

Mercedes Mackay.

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Mr. George Senoga-Zake, a Muganda, has become a licentiate of the Associated Board of Royal Schools of Music. This licentiate is the highest music degree offered by the Board for the Colonies.

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RECORDED FOLK MUSIC

A Review of British and foreign folk music recordings. Edited by A. L. LLOYD.

Now that recordings from many countries are more easily obtainable in this country, a considerable demand has arisen for information on the significance and social background of folk songs and dances.

Mr. Lloyd, the well-known authority on folk music, is editing this Journal to provide such information.

In the first issue (January/February 1958) Mr. Lloyd gives advice on the selection of records to form the basis of a good folk music collection. Subsequent issues deal in turn with the folk traditions of America, Rumania, Spain, Russia, Yugoslavia and other countries. Each article is illustrated by an annotated list of recordings available. Each issue also includes a further annotated section of the latest releases from British recording companies and recent imports, followed by a list of recommended folk music recordings and books from home and abroad.

Price: 1/- per copy, 1/4 by post. Subscription rate: 7/- per annum, 6 issues.

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THE EXOTIC MUSIC SOCIETY

Its aims and activities.

by

H. de Vries—Secretary.

An increasing interest in ancient and primitive cultures, and the music of these peoples has led, in the beginning of 1957, to the foundation in Amsterdam of the EXOTIC MUSIC SOCIETY, under the joint leadership of Mr. H. Arends, a student in sinology and ethno-musicology, and the above, a collector of primitive art and records of ethnic music.

The general aim of the E.M.S., the only organisation of its kind existing in the Netherlands, is to form a group of professionals as well as laymen, as to study together the ethnic music, and its cultural and social background, of the whole world, and on the other hand to further a fuller understanding by the general public of this music, so often regarded as mere primitive by outsiders.

Right from the beginning contacts have been established with noted ethno-musicologists in Holland, of whom Dr. J. Kunst of the Royal Tropical Institute in Amsterdam and Dr. G. D. van Wengen of the National Ethnographical Museum at Leyde—who acts as musicological adviser to the Society—have enrolled as members.

Founded in Amsterdam, interests rapidly increased and within a few months of existence a local section at The Hague had to be launched, whilst in several other cities members act as contact-persons.

Contact has as well been sought and laid with similar organisations abroad, such as the Asian Music Circle in London, the Society for Ethnomusicology in the U.S.A. and others.

One of the main functions of the Society is to form a collection of sound recordings on European and Extra-European ethnic music, as well as on classical and traditional music of the Orient, whilst—only from the point of view of their relation with “pure” folk music—attention is given to more popular folk music. In spite of the difficulties arising in obtaining such material, the collection now amounts already to nearly a thousand gramophone records and tape recordings. Furthermore, a collection is started of literary material and one of musical instruments. Part of the library is consecrated to general ethnology, primitive art and folktales, so as to form a background and source of information for more extensive study on certain subjects.

Owing to limited funds, the Society has as yet not been able to publish separate books or to issue records; contact with the members is, however, maintained by means of a mimeographed bulletin, which contains general information regarding coming events, radio programmes, short articles dealing with lectures given by and for the Society for a general audience.

These lectures, given once a month, are each built around one main theme, dealing with such diverse subjects as African drum-languages, Japanese koto and samisen music, Asiatic love songs, art and music of prehistoric man, etc. Slides were shown and instruments exhibited.

On the other hand the Society co-operated with other institutions in staging such artists as Ravi Shankar—famous sitar player—together with Pandit Chatur Lal in Amsterdam's Concert Hall; and organises filmshows, at which movies are shown with musicological and/or ethnological interest.

Members of the Society are granted reduction on entrance fees or even provided with free tickets for such performances and have been able to attend lectures held by foreign ethno-musicologists. On behalf of record-dealers catalogues of ethnic and exotic music are edited and they are provided with ethnographic material for show windows.

The annual subscription is kept as low as possible, so as to enable anyone interested in the subject to subscribe as a member, and amounts to guilders 2.50 only (about 5/-) scarcely enough to cover ordinary expenses. As the Society is not sponsored by any official organisation, funds have to come from private resources, limiting, of course, as already stated above, the work the E.M.S. is doing.

For the future the Society is planning an improvement on its financial resources, so as to be able to carry on its work on a wider basis.

Furthermore, the Society envisages a closer co-operation with other societies having the same or similar interests, as the E.M.S. is of the opinion that such a co-operation is highly desirable and that, through exchange of experiences as well as information, a fuller understanding of each other can be reached and a closer relationship may be established.

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AFRICAN MUSIC SOCIETY, SOCIAL ACTIVITIES

QUARTERLY SOCIAL MEETINGS—JOHANNESBURG

The **First** of a series of Quarterly Social Meetings of the African Music Society was held on the **12th December, 1956**. The programme was arranged by Mr. Michael Lane, and consisted of three films, two lent by the United Kingdom Information Office, “They Planted a Stone” the story of the Gezira Cotton Scheme, and “Hausa Village”. The third film was obtained through the Pan-African Touring Club from the Belgian State Information Office, and entitled “African Musicians”.

The **Second** in the series was held after the Ninth Annual General Meeting on the **7th March, 1957**, when the premises of the American Express Inc. were again kindly lent by the Hon. Colin Stamp, and the Rev. Brian Kingslake gave a talk on “The Music of Nigeria”. This was followed by a film, made and lent by Mr. R. Phoenix, on “Initiation Ceremonies amongst the Xhosa Youths”.

The **Third Meeting** was held on the **5th June** in the same hall, and on this occasion Mr. and Mrs. John Blacking showed a film and gave a talk on their field work in studying the music of Vandaland. Mr. Tracey also played some recordings which he had made in the Transkei of Pondo stories recounted by Mr. Frank Daniels.

A **Fourth Meeting** was held after an Executive Committee Meeting on the **11th September, 1957**, at which a film lent by the State Information Office was shown and new I.L.A.M. recordings of African music from the Ciskei and the Transkei (Eastern Cape Province) and from the Zambesi valley above the Kariba Dam were played and illustrated by colour slides taken by Mr. L. E. Owles, the Recording Engineer.

LECTURE

On the 15th August, 1957, Professor Melville Herskovits, Head of the Department of Anthropology, Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois, who was visiting South Africa, gave a lecture at the University under the joint auspices of the Society and of the University of the Witwatersrand. Members of the public were invited to attend, and an opportunity for members of the Committee to meet the lecturer was given at an informal gathering in the Staff Common Room after the lecture, the subject of which was "Music and the Arts in the Scientific Study of Man".

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The Companhia de Diamantes de Angola (Diamang) have placed several recordings of African Music from Angola, the work of Senhor Pinha da Silva, Research Member of the African Music Society, at the disposal of the Lisbon Official Broadcasting Station which has featured several 15 minute programmes. The music has been widely appreciated by the Listening Audiences in Portugal.

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The Rev. A. M. Jones gave a lecture on African Music to the Music Club of the Reading University on November 28th, 1957.

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CORRECTION—Journal No. 3

On p. 32, in the article "A Hobbyist Looks at Zulu and Xhosa Songs" Professor Swartz refers to 'John Mseleku.' Mnumzana William J. Mseleku, who is a member of this Society, has asked us to point out the inadvertent error in his name.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

From The Rev. DAVID HAWKINS, St. Paul's College, AWKA, Nigeria.

. . . May I congratulate you on the last issue of the Journal? I felt that some of the articles on African Music in Worship were unduly pessimistic, however.

I think it is true that there are real signs of development in Ibo Church Music since Wilberforce Echezona returned from England. Ten years ago it was almost impossible to find any young man who could produce an original Ibo tune—what passed for Ibo tunes in Choir competitions were usually jazzed up versions of English tunes (I recall a Benedictus to 'O sing to me, gypsy'); now there are a large number of people at work with greater or less success, and the singing Competitions which go through all the stages of Group Church Competitions through District to Archdeaconry Finals produce a large number of more or less Ibo tunes.

It was of course the usual story that the original ban on dancing (and I'm not suggesting it was altogether wrong) produced a generation of young men who lacked the background of their own music and so could not produce any original Ibo tunes. Now a new interest is aroused, and Echezona has played a very great part in this—thanks also to the Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation, who got him to put on a series of 13 illustrated talks and took him all over the country to get recordings he wanted.

One particular way in which we have experimented is by the use of an Antiphon in the Psalms. A great deal of Ibo music consists of a short verse sung by a leader with a short and constantly repeated refrain. In a Psalm a part of a verse which expresses the mood of the Psalm is chosen for the refrain and repeated after each half verse, e.g. in the Venite, for the first seven verses the refrain is "for he is the Lord our God" and for the remainder with a different tune and in a different mood "Harden not your hearts."

This method of course adds considerably to the length, and it may be that it is not the best arrangement for the Canticles, but it would enable the congregation to join in the singing of Psalms. Only the Cantor or choir would have to practise the verses, and the congregation would quickly pick up the chorus. Unfortunately Echezona has got distracted on to a lot of other things and the method has not yet been extended to the Psalms.